

MARXIAN SOCIALISM

POWER ELITE OR RULING CLASS?

by
Paul M. Sweezy

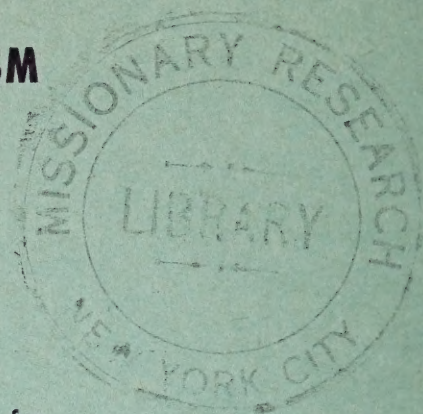
25c

Reprinted from

**MONTHLY
REVIEW**

MARXIAN SOCIALISM

POWER ELITE OR RULING CLASS?



THE AUTHOR—Paul M. Sweezy was for more than ten years a member of the Harvard University Economics Department where he taught courses on American corporations and socialism. He is a frequent contributor to scholarly magazines and popular journals. Among his books are "The Theory of Capitalist Development," "Socialism," and "The Present As History."

THE PUBLISHER—Monthly Review Press publishes books and pamphlets which are generally "too hot" for commercial publishers to handle. On the back cover there is a complete list of its books published to date.

Information concerning the magazine MONTHLY REVIEW is contained on the back flap of the cover. You are invited to subscribe.

Reprinted from Monthly Review:
Marxian Socialism:—November 1956
Power Elite or Ruling Class?—September 1956

Single copy 25 cents

5 copies for \$1.00

30 copies for \$5.00

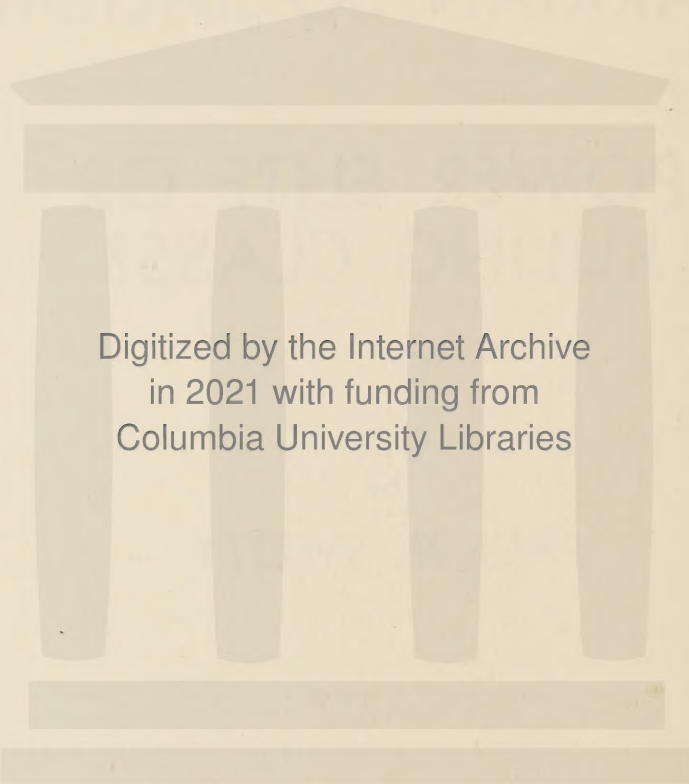
MARXIAN SOCIALISM

POWER ELITE OR RULING CLASS?

by

PAUL M. SWEEZY

New York
Monthly Review Press
November 1956



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2021 with funding from
Columbia University Libraries

MARXIAN SOCIALISM

BY PAUL M. SWEEZY

Mr. Chairman and Ladies and Gentlemen: It is not my habit to read prepared lectures, and I would prefer not to do it tonight. In view of the extraordinary publicity which has surrounded this event, however, I could not refuse the request of the press and wire services for an advance text. And in view of the no less extraordinary interest which certain official quarters have in the past shown in whatever I happen to say at the University of New Hampshire, I think it may be wisest to stick to the text so that at any rate there need be no disagreement about what I am saying tonight.

First, let me say that I am very happy to be here at the University of New Hampshire again. For several years up to and including 1954, it was my privilege and pleasure to come here every spring to lecture in the humanities course and to participate in less formal student and faculty discussions. Due to circumstances over which neither I nor anyone here at the University had any control, these visits were interrupted—to my loss and regret. I hope tonight's meeting marks the renewal of an association which I have always found both enjoyable and fruitful.

But there is another reason why I am glad to be here tonight. Through no virtue (or fault) of mine, my appearance on the campus at this time has become a clear test of the quality of academic freedom that exists at the University of New Hampshire. Academic freedom, let me remind you, is not, at bottom, a matter of my freedom to speak my mind. That freedom, I am glad to say, I still have; and nothing has yet prevented me from making use of it. Academic freedom is fundamentally the freedom of the academic community to employ or otherwise bring before it anyone whose ideas and opinions it may think of interest or importance. It is a part, and a very important part, of the freedom of the sovereign people to educate itself for the responsibility of governing, and as such it is protected by the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. The

This is a slightly revised text of a speech delivered at the University of New Hampshire on May 22, 1956.

essence of the matter was well stated by America's greatest civil libertarian, Alexander Meiklejohn, when he recently told a Congressional Committee that

in the field of public discussion, when citizens and their fellow thinkers "peaceably assemble" to listen to a speaker, whether he be American or foreign, conservative or radical, safe or dangerous, the First Amendment is not in the first instance concerned with the "right" of the speaker to say this or that. It is concerned with the authority of the hearers to meet together, to discuss, and to hear discussed by speakers of their own choice, whatever they may deem worthy of their consideration.

If for any reason this meeting had been prevented from taking place, it would have been *your* authority and *your* freedom that would have been abridged and violated. The fact that it is taking place should prove to the people of New Hampshire that you still have and mean to use that authority and that freedom to hear "whatever you deem worthy of your consideration." I am not now concerned to thank anyone for arranging this meeting and inviting me to address it; but I am very definitely concerned to congratulate those who have been responsible—particularly the members of the short-lived Committee for Academic Freedom and of the Senior Skulls Society—for fighting the matter through and thus proving beyond any doubt that academic freedom is still alive at our state university.

What Is Marxism?

I turn now to our topic for this evening, and I think perhaps the best way to proceed is to try to answer the question: What is Marxism?

Marxism is a body of ideas about the nature of the universe, of man, of society, and of history. It bears the name of Karl Marx, a German who was born in 1818 and died in 1883, and who lived the latter half of his life in London. Marx was a man of prodigious learning and enormously powerful intellect, one of the greatest thinkers not only of the nineteenth century but of all recorded history.

Marx combined in his system of ideas the realistic philosophy of the English and French Enlightenment, the comprehensive and dynamic point of view of the German idealists and particularly of Hegel, and the hardheaded analysis of the capitalist economy which we owe to the great British classical economists. The result was a brilliant new synthesis which is both highly original and at the same time stands squarely in the mainstream of modern intellectual development from the Renaissance onward. Here, in desperate brevity, are what I understand to be the central elements of the Marxian view of society and history:

The universe is real and existed for eons before there was human life, or for that matter life of any kind, on our planet. Life here on the earth is a natural by-product of the earth's cooling, and humanity is the result of a long process of evolution. In the earliest stages of society, human labor was still so unproductive that it yielded no surplus over and above the requirements of life and reproduction. As long as this was true, men lived in a state of primitive communism—cooperating, sharing, fighting, but not yet exploiting each other.

Later, techniques improved so much that a man could produce a surplus over and above what he needed for himself, and from this dates the beginning of economic exploitation and social classes. When one tribe fought and defeated another, it was now worthwhile to take captive the vanquished and force them to work for the victors. Some men became rulers living off the surplus produced by others; while the actual producers lost their independence and spent their lives toiling for their masters. It was in this way that exploitation of man by man and the division of society into classes originated.

But the form of exploitation has not remained unchanged—indeed, nothing remains unchanged, everything is in a constant state of flux. The exploiters seek to expand the surplus at their disposal, and with this end in view they invent and introduce new and better techniques of production; the exploited seek to improve their condition and therefore carry on a never-ending struggle to enlarge their share of the product. As a result the forms of exploitation change, and with them the whole structure of society. At first it was slavery, in which the laborer is the property of his master. Next came serfdom, in which the laborer has attained a certain degree of freedom but is still tied to the soil. And finally there is wage labor, in which the laborer is legally entirely free but must work for the profit of others because he lacks means of production of his own.

A society based on private ownership of the means of production and wage labor is called capitalism. It came into the world first in England and certain parts of Western Europe, not all at once but gradually and painfully between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. It brought with it social and political upheavals, new ways of thinking, and a deep awareness of the vast creative potentials of human labor and industry. Historically speaking, capitalism was a long leap forward. In the words of the *Communist Manifesto*: "It has been the first to show what man's activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals; it has conducted expeditions that put in the shade all former migrations and crusades."

But capitalism contains within itself what Marx called contra-

dictions which prevent it from fully realizing the potentials which it was the first to uncover. The capitalist class, comprising those who own the instruments of production and set them in motion, is and must be concerned with making profits, not with the general welfare. Capitalists subordinate other aims to the maximization of profit. In pursuit of this objective, they pay workers as little as they can get away with and steadily introduce labor-saving machinery. The consequence, of course, is to hold down the consuming power of the working class. At the same time, the capitalists restrict their own consumption in the interests of accumulating more and more capital. But accumulating more and more capital means adding to society's productive capacity. We, therefore, have the paradox that capitalism steps on the brake as far as consumption is concerned and on the accelerator as far as production is concerned. This is its basic contradiction, and it cannot be eliminated except through changing the system from one of production for profit to one of production for use.

On the basis of this analysis, Marx believed that it was to the interest of the workers to organize themselves politically in order eventually to gain power and replace capitalism by a system based upon common ownership of the means of production and economic planning, a system to which he and his followers came in time to give the name of socialism. Moreover, Marx had no doubt that the workers would in fact follow this course, and that their growing numbers, importance, and discipline under capitalism would sooner or later ensure their victory. As to *how* the transition would be effected, Marx at first thought that it would have to be everywhere by means of a violent revolution. But as political democracy spread, especially in the English-speaking countries, he modified this view and in the last decades of his life believed that a peaceful and legal transition was quite possible in some countries and under some conditions. "We know," he said in a speech at Amsterdam in 1872, "that special regard must be paid to the institutions, customs, and traditions of various lands; and we do not deny that there are certain countries, such as the United States and England, in which the workers may hope to achieve their ends by peaceful means."

What Is Socialism?

So much then for Marxism. Naturally, my account is oversimplified and very incomplete, but I hope it may serve to give you some idea of the scope and quality of Marx's thought—so different from the impressions which demagogic opponents have always sought to convey. Let us now ask: What is socialism?

Socialism, according to Marx, is the form of society which will succeed capitalism, just as capitalism is the form of society which succeeded feudalism.

The fundamental change would consist in the abolition of private ownership of the means of production. Please note that neither Marx nor (so far as I know) any other modern socialist of importance ever advocated or expected that private ownership of consumer goods would or should be abolished. On the contrary, he favored the multiplication of consumer goods in the hands of the lower-income groups, hence a great extension of private ownership in this sphere.

As to the form of ownership of the means of production which would characterize socialism, Marxists have never been dogmatic. Ownership must be by public bodies, but that does not necessarily mean only the central government: local governments, special public authorities of one sort or another, and cooperatives can also own means of production under socialism. And there can even be a certain amount of private ownership, provided it is confined to industries in which production takes place on a small scale.

A corollary of public ownership of the means of production is economic planning. The capitalist economy is governed by the market, that is to say, by private producers responding to price movements with a view to maximizing their own profits. It is through this mechanism that supply and demand are adjusted to each other and productive resources are allocated to various industries and branches of production. But public bodies have no compelling reason to maximize their profits (though, admittedly, under certain circumstances they may be *directed* to make as much profit as they can). In general, therefore, they must have some other principle to guide their economic conduct, and this can only be the following of a plan which coordinates the activities of all the public bodies.

Now socialists claim that it is precisely the freedom from the necessity to make profits and the coordination of all economic activities by a general plan which allows socialism to overcome the contradictions of capitalism and to develop its resources and technology for the greatest good of the people as a whole. Under such a system, crises and unemployment could only result from bad planning; and while bad planning is certainly not impossible, especially in the early stages of socialist society, there is no reason why planners should not learn to correct their mistakes and to reduce the resulting maladjustments and disproportions to smaller and smaller dimensions.

What about the non-economic aspects of socialism? Here Marx had a well-developed theory. He expected socialism to come first in the more advanced industrialized countries and to build on the political foundations which they had already achieved. Since in such countries the workers were in a majority, he believed that the taking of political power by the working class would mean full democracy

and liberty for most of the people, though he also expected that there would be a period of greater or lesser duration when the rights and freedoms of the former exploiters would be subject to certain restrictions. As to the longer-run future, he reasoned that the full development of society's economic potential under socialism would gradually raise the well-being and education of everyone so that eventually all classes and class distinctions would be done away with. When that happened—but not before—the state as a repressive apparatus for dealing with class and other forms of social conflict would “wither away.” The final goal of Marx and his followers can therefore be said to be the same as that of the philosophical anarchists. It would be a state of society in which, to quote Marx's words, “the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all” and in which distribution takes place according to the principle “from each according to his ability, to each according to his need.”

Others before Marx had had a similar vision of a good society to come—a society of abundance and brotherhood in place of the society of scarcity and alienation which the human race had always been condemned to live in. What particularly distinguished Marx from his predecessors is that he purported to prove that this society of the future, which he called socialism, is not only a dream and a hope but is in fact the next stage of historical evolution. It would not come automatically, to be sure—not as the result of the blind decrees of fate. It would come rather as the result of the conscious, organized activity of working people, the vast majority of mankind. Given this perspective, the task of the humanitarian could only be to devote his energies to educating and organizing the working class to fulfill its historic mission. That, in a word, is what Marxists have been trying to do for nearly a hundred years now.

Was Marx Right?

Marx's prophetic forecast of the end of capitalism and the opening of a new era in human history was given to the world in the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848. More than a century has passed since. Do the facts of this intervening period permit us to say whether Marx was right or wrong?

In the broadest sense, I do not see how it can be denied that Marx has been brilliantly vindicated. A mighty socialist movement based on the working class grew up during his lifetime. The crises of capitalism, far from abating, grew in intensity and violence, culminating in the holocausts of two world wars. Beginning with the Russian Revolution of 1917, more and more of the earth's population has withdrawn from the orbit of capitalism and has undertaken to

reconstruct its economy and society on the basis of public ownership and planning. Today, something like a third of the human race has definitively abandoned private enterprise and, under Communist leadership, is building up a network of planned economies.

But it is not only in Communist-led countries that this is happening, though elsewhere the pace is slower. Since World War II, Great Britain has moved a considerable distance along the road to a socialized economy, and one of the two big political parties is a socialist party. Even more recently, India, next to Communist China the most populous country in the world, has adopted a Five Year Plan which the sober London *Times* calls "India's Socialist Plan."

The fact is that over most of the world's surface the trend is now visibly away from private enterprise and toward public ownership of the means of production, away from market-dominated economies and toward economic planning. Only in the United States and a few countries closely allied to the United States does the trend seem to be in the other direction. Here, it is true, the socialist movement is at a low ebb, and private enterprise is very much in the saddle.

Should we perhaps conclude that Marx was right for the rest of the world but wrong for the United States? Are we the great exception? Or are we merely lagging somewhat behind in a movement which eventually will be as universal as Marx predicted it would?

These are crucial questions, especially for us Americans. In what time remains to me, I shall attempt to indicate some possible answers.

There is one respect, and it is an important one, in which Marx was certainly wrong. As I noted earlier, he expected socialism to come first in the most advanced industrial countries. It did not. For reasons having to do with the late 19th- and early 20th-century development of relations between the advanced countries and the colonial and semi-colonial backward countries, the revolutionary movement grew more rapidly and had more opportunities in the backward than in the advanced regions. When the capitalist system was wracked by the destruction and disasters of the two world wars, it broke at its weakest points not at its strongest. Socialism came first to the Tsarist Empire, and spread from there to Eastern Europe and China.

This has, of course, meant that the early stages of the development of socialism have been very different from what Marx foresaw.

The new order could not build directly on the achievements of the old. It had no developed industrial base, no educated and trained labor force, no political democracy. It had to start from scratch and work under conditions of utmost difficulty.

Many people, including Marxists, expected socialism to proceed at once, or at any rate within a short time, to achieve its great goals: an economy of abundance, increasing democracy and freedom for the workers, a richer life for all. It could have happened that way if Britain, Germany, and the United States had been the first great socialist countries. But it could not possibly happen that way in backward Russia standing alone for a whole generation. The industrial base had to be built, and that meant belt-tightening. The Russians had no traditions of democracy and civil liberty, and under the difficult conditions of the '20s and '30s it was natural that a new police state should arise on the foundations of the old Tsarist police state. Moreover, like all police states this one committed excesses and horrors which had little if anything to do with the central tasks of construction the regime had set itself.

Under these circumstances, socialism in practice had little attraction for the people of the advanced countries. The standard of living of those living under it remained abysmally low, and political conduct, both among leaders and between leaders and people, often seemed closer to oriental despotism than to enlightened socialism. It was widely assumed in the West either that the Soviet Union was not socialist at all, or that socialism had been tried and failed.

In the underdeveloped countries, however, the USSR made a very different impression. They saw rapid economic advance, a vast process of popular education, some improvement in living standards—and never having experienced democracy themselves, they hardly noticed its absence in Russia. Communism was imposed on Eastern Europe by the Red Army chasing Hitler back to Berlin, but in China it was the product of a great popular revolution. And it is now expanding its influence throughout the underdeveloped regions of the world.

The Competition of the Systems

The two systems of capitalism and socialism exist side by side in the world today. They are competing for the support and emulation of the backward and uncommitted countries. They are also competing in terms of absolute performance. How will this contest turn out? Will those now in the capitalist camp remain there? Or will they tend to join the socialist camp as time goes on? And finally, what about the United States, the leader of the capitalist camp?

These are questions which every serious person in the world is asking today. I predict that they will be increasingly the center of attention in the years and decades ahead.

The answers, I think, will depend very largely on the relative success of the two systems in the following fields: production and

income, education, and liberty. I believe that socialism will win out in this great world-shaking contest, and I am going to conclude my talk by trying to give you some of the reasons why I hold this view. I should add perhaps that I don't expect you to agree with me at this stage of the game. The decisive forces and trends are still operating for the most part below the surface, and it will be some time yet before they can be seen and evaluated by all. But I hope that I may succeed in making you *think* seriously about these matters. It is, I believe, important that Americans should be put on notice that things are happening in the world, and will increasingly happen, which contradict their established thought patterns and expectations. You may not believe me yet, but at any rate if you pay serious attention to what I say you should not be surprised when things turn out differently from the way you have been taught to expect.

Let us first look at the relative performance of the two systems in the economic field proper. It will be generally agreed, I suppose, that United States capitalism has been doing about as well as can be expected in the last decade. Let us assume for the sake of the argument that it continues to do as well (though I myself think a good case can be made out for the view that this is too favorable an assumption for capitalism). Let us also assume that the USSR continues to grow at about its present rate, though I believe this is likely to be an under- rather than an over-estimate. On these assumptions, what will be the outcome of the economic competition between the systems?

The answer is clear and unambiguous. Here is the way the Oxford economist, Peter Wiles, put the matter in a broadcast over the BBC last fall (I am quoting from the October 20th, 1955, issue of *The Listener*, weekly publication of the BBC):

Perhaps the most important fact in all modern economics is that the rate of growth of productivity is higher in the Soviet Union than in any important free country at the period of its maximum development, let alone now. That is, whether we take roughly comparable circumstances or the present circumstances, the Soviet superiority remains. The best performance by a large non-Communist economy for a long period together appears to be that of Japan: between 1912 and 1937 she grew by about 3 percent per annum. The Soviet economy grew by about 5½ percent per annum before the war and by about 7½ percent since 1948. For mining and manufacturing alone . . . the figures are: Japan 7 percent, USSR 12 percent.

We see that the overwhelming Communist superiority in industry alone leads to a great overall superiority (in the whole national income). The effect of compound interest is very great over a few decades. Thus, growing 3 percent per annum faster

than the United States, the USSR could catch up from a starting point of half the United States national income per head in 23 years.

These facts are not widely known in the United States, I am sorry to say, but there is no doubt about their authenticity. Thus, for example, the *New York Times* of a few days ago (May 18) quotes Mr. Hugh Gaitskell, leader of the British Labor Party and himself a trained economist, as having told the Convention of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, meeting in Atlantic City, that "Soviet national income was going up 10 percent a year, double the United States rate." If this continues, the USSR will overtake and surpass the United States in *per capita income* in about four more Five Year Plans.

Let us turn now to our second field of competition, education. Developments here are no less startling, and unfortunately no better known, than in the field of economics proper. So far as the Soviet Union is concerned, I can do no better than quote from what former Senator William Benton of Connecticut wrote in the *New York Times* Sunday magazine section on April 1, 1956, after a trip to the Soviet Union to study educational developments there:

What is it that most impresses the foreign observer about the Soviet school system? In less than forty years, starting with a population about 50 percent illiterate, the Soviets have built a seven-year primary schools system rivalling our own in universality, with nearly 100 percent enrollment.

Since World War II, the Soviet secondary school system has mushroomed amazingly. By 1960 the basic ten-year school is to be compulsory everywhere. In spite of acute labor shortages, all children are to be kept in school from 7 to 17. Every Russian youngster is to be given an education—a Communist education, of course, but comparable in its high standards of study and learning to an English public school or a French lycee. . . .

Further, the USSR is on the road to surpassing the US both in the number and percentage of students enrolled in institutions above the secondary level. Indeed, when high level extension-correspondence students are included, the Soviet total of 4,300,000 enrolled in 1955 is already 70 percent over our 2,700,000. The Soviet Union offers as much training to every boy and girl as his or her talents and abilities will absorb. . . .

Eighty to 90 percent of all students at Soviet higher institutions have been on state scholarships, which included stipends rising slightly from year to year. In February we learned from the Party Congress that beginning this autumn all education is to be free.

This speaks for itself, and all I would add is that the standards

of the English public school and the French lycee are far above the average of our public schools.

The results of this enormous educational program are already beginning to show. According to Sir John Cockroft, head of Britain's Atomic Energy Establishment at Harwell, "Britain's output of graduate engineers was about 2,800 a year, while the figure for the United States was 23,000 and for the Soviet 53,000." (*New York Times*, April 14, 1956.) In other words, the USSR is already turning out more than twice as many engineers as the two most advanced capitalist countries combined. In science proper, Sir John estimated that the Soviet output was about ten times that of the British, and that the Russian scientists were fully as well trained as their British counterparts.

But maybe the capitalist countries are doing something to catch up in this all important field of education? If so, there are few enough signs of it. The secret of the Russian program, of course, is to train and vastly expand the number of teachers. To this end, teachers are treated with the greatest respect and are among the highest paid groups in Soviet society. The best graduates are enticed and urged into teaching: I have even heard from an American doctor who recently visited the Soviet Union that in medicine the top 3 to 5 percent of each graduating class is not permitted to practice but is, so to speak, drafted into the medical schools. How is it with us? How do we treat our teachers? What inducements do we offer to young men and women to enter the teaching profession?

Alas, I am afraid I hardly need speak of these matters to an audience like this. Whether faculty or students searching out what career to follow in life, you know all too well the answers to these questions. I will simply quote a few brief passages from a letter I happened to see in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (April 20) when I was recently in that beautiful city. It is signed by "A Math Professor, Ph.D.":

. . . A teacher of science in the Soviet Union is reported to have an income in the very highest brackets, as compared with other occupations, whereas in the United States a teacher of science usually finds himself in the lowest income bracket; often he finds it impossible to maintain his family on a minimum living scale. . . . I have myself arrived at a certain eminence, with my Ph.D. in mathematics along with ten years of actual engineering experience besides 12 highly successful years as a professor. . . . Accordingly, I have been honored by the offer, which I have just accepted, to assume the position of chairman of the mathematics department of a leading private university on the West Coast. The job pays \$5,500 a year. My son-in-law, who graduated from high school a few years ago and is now a book-

keeper, earns almost precisely the same amount. . . . Let us face the result: an economy which cares so little about its professors of science as to place them on a bottom rung is not entitled to ask for a leading world position in science, and we shall not achieve it.

It is a sad story, but all too easy to understand. There is no profit to be made out of education—not directly anyway. And it is profit that guides a capitalist society. As long as we have capitalism, we shall undoubtedly treat our teachers as second-class citizens, and educationally we shall fall farther and farther behind a society which puts science and education above dollars.

We come finally to the question of liberty. Here the advanced capitalist countries started with an advantage over the Soviet Union no less enormous than in the field of economics. And on the whole, they have succeeded in preserving their lead more successfully here than in economics. The Soviet police state certainly has an unenviable record of arbitrary arrests, trials, purges, shootings, labor camps, and all the rest—you are much more familiar with this than with the Soviet Union's record in production and education. The question for the future really is whether these are necessary features of socialism as such or whether they result from Russia's dark past, from the almost unimaginable difficulties of building an industrial economy in a backward country against implacable outside hostility, and from the tensions and fears of a world in which war is an ever-present threat.

There is no certain way of answering this question yet. I can only say that as a convinced socialist, I see no reason for despair and every reason for hope. I do not myself attribute much of the Soviet Union's record in the field of liberty to the evil doings of any one man, including Stalin. One-man interpretations of history are too easy—and really explain nothing. And yet there is no doubt that the last few years, which happen to be the years since Stalin's death, have witnessed a considerable change in the Soviet world, and the pace of this change has been sharply stepped up in recent months. Many of the abuses of the past were sharply denounced at the February Congress of the Communist Party. Since then, we have been told that a new judicial code is soon to be promulgated which will bring the USSR closer to our idea of a government of laws rather than of men. The labor camps have mostly been closed, and it has just been announced that they will soon be abolished altogether. Workers can now leave their jobs by simply giving two weeks notice. A friend of mine who is a professor at Stanford University happened to be in Moscow on his way to India in December and again in March on his way back. He reports that the whole atmosphere, and

especially the attitude toward foreigners, had undergone a startling change for the better.

Is all this merely a temporary aberration, or is it the beginning of a new trend toward liberalization in the socialist countries? I myself firmly believe the latter to be the correct interpretation. And I think the cause is clear: the forced march in the economic sphere is drawing to a close; Soviet citizens now constitute one of the best educated publics in the world; the achievement of atomic parity with the United States has given them an unprecedented feeling of security; and the Soviet Union, far from being isolated, is now surrounded by friends and allies, including the most populous country in the world. The preconditions for internal relaxation and liberalization are there. What is especially encouraging to all who love liberty, and that certainly includes the vast majority of the world's socialists, is that relaxation and liberalization *are actually happening*.

I believe that the trend is here to stay, barring another war which I think increasingly less likely. In the long run, it will present capitalism with the greatest challenge of all. Up to now, the defenders of capitalism have always been able to counter arguments for socialism with the reply: "Look at the slave labor camps in Russia!" And there's no doubt that it has been an effective argument. Now, however, the camps are disappearing. Suppose all that they symbolize also disappears? Suppose socialism shows what Marxists have always maintained, that it is possible to have economic collectivism *and* freedom? Suppose the socialist world overtakes and surpasses the capitalist world not only in production and per capita income, not only in education and science, but also in freedom and respect for the dignity of the individual? What then?

You may think these questions fantastic now. Perhaps. But let me make a suggestion. Let me propose that you file them away in the back of your mind and then bring them out, say once every year, and check the answers you are able to give on the basis of the latest facts available to you. I have no doubt what the answers will be, sooner or later. If I am right, it will be facts and not my arguments that will convince you. And I am very glad to leave it to the future to decide.

POWER ELITE OR RULING CLASS?

BY PAUL M. SWEEZY

There is a sort of contrived bloodlessness about American academic social science today. Its practitioners are much better trained than they used to be, but the consequence is not only technical competence. No less striking is the way they all fit into a few neat molds, like the models of an automobile coming off the factory assembly lines. They talk alike, deal in the same brand of trivialities, and take each other enormously seriously. Above all, there is a kind of tacit conspiracy to banish all really interesting and important issues from the universe of "scientific" discourse.

Against this background, C. Wright Mills, Associate Professor of Sociology at Columbia University, stands out as a man of courage and imagination, an iconoclast who cares little for the sacred cows of university administrators and foundation trustees, an innovator who wants to get along with the important business of understanding the United States of America in the middle of the twentieth century. In *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*, he explored the emotional and cultural wastelands of American society. Now, in *The Power Elite* (Oxford University Press, \$6.00), he goes a step farther and asks who really runs the show and what makes them tick. The result is an absorbing book that has the added fascination which always attaches to forbidden topics.

The plan of Mills' book is as follows: He opens with a chapter ("The Higher Circles") which gives a general sketch of the theme of the work as a whole. There then follow nine chapters devoted to analyzing the Higher Circles from various angles and by various breakdowns: Local Society, Metropolitan 400, The Celebrities, The Very Rich, The Chief Executives, The Corporate Rich, The Warlords, The Military Ascendancy, and The Political Directorate. Finally come five chapters of interpretation and argumentation: The Theory of Balance, The Power Elite, The Mass Society, The Conservative Mood, and The Higher Immorality. There is no compelling logic to the organization of the material, and rigor and elegance are not among Mills' outstanding virtues as a writer. The result is that the book contains not a few asides and excursions, much repetition, and considerable excess verbiage. The whole work would have benefited from a severe editing, and its impact on the reader would, I think, have been sharpened and intensified if it had been cut by, say, a quarter to a third.

Perhaps the greatest merit of *The Power Elite* is that it boldly breaks the tabu which respectable intellectual society has imposed on any serious discussion of how and by whom America is ruled. Those of us who inhabit what may be called the radical underworld have, of course, never been constrained by this particular tabu, but it must be admitted that radicals have produced very little of scientific value in recent years, and even work that does meet minimum standards of competence has been pretty effectively smothered. In contrast, *The Power Elite*, written by a professor at a respectable university and brought out by a properly conservative publishing house, has already been widely reviewed in such media as *Time* and *The Saturday Review of Literature*, and seems certain to provoke controversy among Mills' professional colleagues. For the first time in a long while, the literate public has been exposed to a serious discussion of social power and stratification at the national—as distinct from the local—level, and currently fashionable theories of the dispersal of power among many groups and interests have been bluntly challenged as flimsy apologetics. This is all to the good, and we may hope that Mills' example will be not only heeded but also emulated by other academic authors and established publishers.*

The fact that it raises crucially important issues is by no means the only merit of *The Power Elite*. Indeed, a reviewer cannot pretend even to list all the book's many excellencies: to appreciate them, one must read and study it with the care it deserves. But I do want to call attention to certain features which struck at least one reader as particularly noteworthy:

(1) There are numerous flashes of insight and happy formulations which not only enliven the narrative but, more important, help us to understand difficult or obscure problems. It would be hard

* Let me take this occasion to express a subsidiary hope that writers like Mills will become even bolder in challenging the tabus of respectability. Ever since it was founded in 1949, *Monthly Review* has consistently sought to analyze and clarify the problems of *national* power in American society—not, I hope, without throwing out some useful and interesting suggestions. Mills makes generous reference in his notes to our analysis of "The Roots and Prospects of McCarthyism" (MR, January 1954) but otherwise fails to note, even in a bibliographical way, any of the numerous articles and editorials which have dealt with one or more aspects of his chosen subject. Of course, it is possible that Mills may not be familiar with this material or may consider it of no value. A more likely explanation of his ignoring it, I think, is a (perhaps unconscious) fear of what might be called "guilt by citation." At any rate this fear is certainly common enough in academic circles nowadays, whether or not it was operative in Mills' case. From the point of view of the "power elite," it serves the useful purpose of helping to isolate radicals and censor radical thought. From the point of view of scientific discussion and advance, needless to say, its effects are wholly negative.

to find a juster or more damning description of our postwar intellectuals than "those who have abandoned criticism for the new American celebration." (P. 25.) It is more than merely salutary to be reminded that "class consciousness is not equally characteristic of all levels of American society: it is most apparent in the upper class." (P. 30.) Much of the restless movement of the United States today is illuminated by the statement: "To succeed is to leave local society behind—although certification by it may be needed in order to be selected for national cliques." (P. 39.) How vividly the connection between wealth and social standing comes out in this remark: "All families would seem to be rather 'old,' but not all of them have possessed wealth for at least two but preferably three or four generations." (P. 49.) And how very apt and accurate is the designation of our present-day corporate system as an "apparatus of appropriation" (p. 107) which showers on its beneficiaries all kinds of blessings in addition to their take-home pay. (Mills is right to emphasize this theme in several different contexts: my only criticism is that he doesn't emphasize it enough.) These are but a few random samples, taken from the first quarter of *The Power Elite*, of what I mean by "flashes of insight and happy formulations." They are among the real pleasures and rewards of the book.

(2) Equally impressive is the factual material which Mills has assembled and analyzed in support or illustration of his arguments. He has made good use of the specialized work of social scientists—for example, H. B. Hollingshead's *Elmtown's Youth* and Dixon Wecter's *The Saga of American Society*—but for the most part he relies on original research in the current press and biographical sources. In this connection, he presents a number of statistical and semi-statistical studies which are important contributions in their own right and which should go far toward exploding some of the more popular and persistent myths about the rich and the powerful in America today. Chapter 5 on "The Very Rich" is essentially such a study, and there are others of a somewhat less ambitious nature in most of the chapters which undertake to categorize and describe "the power elite." Mills is well aware that an individual researcher, even with considerable help from friends, students, and assistants, can hardly hope to do more than scratch the surface of the vast amount of relevant material which exists in this country: he was, in fact, frequently obliged to put drastic limits on the scope of his efforts. Nevertheless, his factual statements are for the most part solidly, if not exhaustively, supported; and in a field which is not likely to benefit from the generosity (or curiosity) of the well-heeled foundations, we shall probably have to remain content with the contributions of individual researchers. One could only wish that they were all as careful, competent, and imaginative as Mills.

(3) It seems to me that Mills speaks with the voice of an authentic American radicalism. He is highly critical of the American system and frequently lays about him with strong adjectives, heavy sarcasm, and biting invective. But he doesn't *hate* "the American way of life" and turn his back on it, as so many of our foreign critics do; and he isn't overawed by foreign authority, as so many of our native radicals have always been. One gets the impression that Mills not only understands but to a considerable extent even shares the predominant values of the American "mass society." He indulges in none of the currently fashionable deprecation of "materialism," and his attitude toward wealth is well indicated in a passage which is worth quoting at some length:

The idea that the millionaire finds nothing but a sad, empty place at the top of society; the idea that the rich do not know what to do with their money; the idea that the successful become filled up with futility, and that those born successful are poor and little as well as rich—the idea, in short, of the disconsolateness of the rich—is, in the main, merely a way by which those who are not rich reconcile themselves to the fact. Wealth in America is directly gratifying and directly leads to many further gratifications.

To be truly rich is to possess the means of realizing in big ways one's little whims and fantasies and sicknesses. "Wealth has great privileges," Balzac once remarked, "and the most enviable of them all is the power of carrying out thoughts and feelings to the uttermost; of quickening sensibility by fulfilling its myriad caprices." The rich, like other men, are perhaps more simply human than otherwise. But their toys are bigger; they have more of them; they have more of them all at once. (Pp. 163-164.)

The same idea is more simply summed up in a statement quoted from Sophie Tucker (without either approval or disapproval in the context): "I've been rich and I've been poor, and believe me, rich is best." (P. 346.) For a radical, the corollary of this attitude is that it is not wealth that is wrong with America but poverty, and that what is reprehensible about the rich is not that they enjoy the good things of life but that they use their power to maintain a system which needlessly denies the same advantages to others. Mills, to be sure, doesn't spell this out, but I think it is undeniably implicit in his whole position.

It is easy to criticize this point of view, and indeed much of what Mills himself says about the irresponsibility, mindlessness, and immorality of "the power elite" would furnish the basis of a damning indictment of wealth in a context of exploitation, an indictment which Mills conspicuously fails to elaborate in any thorough or sys-

tematic way. But I think that Mills' weaknesses in this connection are characteristically American and that for this reason they have much to teach us about the possibility and requirements of an effective American radical propaganda. Denunciations of wealth as such, in the earlier tradition of radical thought, are likely to fall on deaf ears in this country today: rightly or wrongly, most Americans approve of it and want more for themselves. A successful radical movement must convince them that it really has more of it to offer the great majority of them than has the present system of waste and plunder.

(4) Mills performs a very valuable service in insisting, emphatically and at times even dogmatically, that what happens in the United States today depends crucially on the will and decision of a relatively very small group which is essentially self-perpetuating and responsible to no one but its own membership. And in upholding this position, he earns our gratitude by a forthright attack on the social harmonics of our latter-day Bastiats such as J. K. Galbraith and David Riesman. Galbraith and Riesman are able social scientists and keen observers of the American scene, but their overall "theories," for which they have received so much praise and fame, are childishly pretentious and superficial. It is high time that a reputable member of the academic community should say so. Some day American social scientists will acknowledge the debt they owe to Mills for having been the first among them to proclaim in no uncertain terms that the king is naked.

I do not mean to imply by this any blanket endorsement of Mills' theoretical contributions. As I hope to show immediately, Mills' theory is open to serious criticism. But he has the very great merit of bringing the real issues into the open and discussing them in a way that any one can understand; and he refuses to condone the kind of slick cover-up job that so many of his academic colleagues have been helping to put over on the American and foreign publics in the years of the "American celebration."

It is not easy to criticize *The Power Elite* from a theoretical standpoint for the simple reason that the author often states or implies more than one theory on a given topic or range of topics. Sometimes, I think, this arises from haste in composition and a certain intellectual sloppiness or impatience which seems to characterize much of Mills' work. Sometimes it seems to result from acceptance of the substance as well as the terminology of a kind of "elitist" doctrine which is basically antithetical to the general trend of his thought. And sometimes, no doubt, it arises from the fact that Mills, like most of the rest of us, has not made up his mind about all the problems of American social structure and finds himself with

conflicting ideas rattling around in his head. In the brief space available here, I cannot attempt to untangle these confusions and contradictions, nor can I presume to say which of various possible interpretations most accurately reflects Mills' true meaning. Rather, I shall concentrate on trying to show what's wrong with certain ideas, adding in advance an invitation to Mills to correct me to the extent that I am wrong in attributing them to him or to make any other rejoinder he may think called for.

Mills starts off with a concept of the power elite which is disarmingly simple. Those who occupy the "command posts" of our major economic, military, and political institutions constitute the power elite—the big shareholders and executives of the corporate system, the generals and admirals of the Pentagon, and the elected and appointed officials who occupy political positions of national significance. But this of course tells us nothing about the men who stand at these posts—how they got there, their attitudes and values, their relations with each other and with the rest of society, and so on—nor does it provide any but an admittedly misleading clue to these questions: Mills himself repeatedly rejects the notion that the power elite in his sense constitutes some sort of natural aristocracy of ability and intelligence, in spite of the common connotation of the term "elite."

Having in effect defined the power elite as composed of the big shots of industry and government, Mills' next task is to devise a theoretical scheme within which to locate them and to guide his empirical investigations into their characteristics and habits. Two general approaches readily suggest themselves, and Mills follows them both without ever clearly distinguishing them, without asking how far and in what respects they may be in conflict, and without any systematic attempt to reconcile their divergent results. The first approach is via social class: the hypothesis can be put forward and tested that those who occupy the command posts do so as representatives or agents of a national ruling class which trains them, shapes their thought patterns, and selects them for their positions of high responsibility. The second approach is via what Mills variously calls the "major institutional orders" (e.g., on p. 269), the "major hierarchies" (p. 287), the "big three domains" (p. 288), and other more or less synonymous terms. This assumes that there are distinct spheres of social life—the economic, the military, and the political—each with its own institutional structure, that each of these spheres throws up its own leading cadres, and that the top men of all three come together to form the power elite.

Now there may be societies, past or present, in which this idea of more or less autonomous orders, hierarchies, or domains has enough

relevance to make it a fruitful approach to problems of social structure and power. But it seems perfectly clear to me that the United States is not and never has been such a society. Moreover, the cumulative effect of the empirical data presented by Mills is decisively against any such interpretation of the American system. He adduces a wealth of material on our class system, showing how the local units of the upper class are made up of propertied families and how these local units are welded together into a wholly self-conscious national class. He shows how the "power elite" is overwhelmingly (and increasingly) recruited from the upper levels of the class system, how the same families contribute indifferently to the economic, military, and political "elites," and how the same individuals move easily and almost imperceptibly back and forth from one to another of these "elites." When it comes to "The Political Directorate" (Chapter 10), he demonstrates that the notion of a specifically political elite is in reality a myth, that the crucial positions in government and politics are increasingly held by what he calls "political outsiders," and that these outsiders are in fact members or errand boys of the corporate rich.

This demonstration in effect reduces "the big three" to "the big two"—the corporate and the military domains. There is no doubt at all about the decisive importance of the former, and Mills makes some of his most useful and interesting contributions in discussing the wealth, power, and other characteristics of the corporate rich.* But the evidence for an autonomous, or even semi-autonomous, military domain of comparable importance is so weak that it can be said to be almost nonexistent. Historically, to be sure, the military has normally been somewhat separated from the main stream of American life, and in this sense one could perhaps speak of a military domain. But it has been small and completely subject to civilian control, quite impotent in terms of the national decision-making which is the special function of Mills' power elite. In wartime, of course, the military has swelled enormously in size and power, but it is precisely then that it has ceased to be a separate domain. The civilian higher circles have moved into commanding military positions, and the top brass has been accepted into the higher circles. What happens in such times is that the "power elite" becomes militarized in the sense that it has to concern itself with military problems, it requires military skills, and it must inculcate in the underlying population greater respect for military virtues and personnel.

* The three chapters entitled "The Very Rich," "The Chief Executives," and "The Corporate Rich" are not really about different groups. They are simply about differently constructed but widely overlapping samplings of what is essentially a homogeneous social stratum which can be aptly designated as "the corporate rich."

All this has nothing in common with the rise to power of a military order headed by an elite of "warlords," though it is in these terms that Mills describes what has been happening in the United States since the beginning of World War II, and indeed *must* describe it or else abandon the whole theory of a composite power elite made up of separate "domainal" elites; for on his own showing the "political directorate" is merely an emanation of the corporate rich. To support the theory of "The Warlords" (Chapter 8) and "The Military Ascendancy" (Chapter 9), Mills brings forth little evidence beyond the well-known facts that the military trade has traditionally required a specialized training and code of conduct, and that the Pentagon is an important center of power in American life. But these facts require no such fancy interpretation and are perfectly compatible with a more prosaic theory of the locus of power in mid-twentieth-century United States.

But Mills really relies much less on facts than on a sort of unstated syllogism to back up his warlord-military ascendancy theory. The syllogism might be formulated as follows: the major outlines of American policy, both foreign and domestic, are drawn in terms of a "military definition of world reality" which has been accepted by the power elite as a whole; this military definition of reality (also referred to as "military metaphysics") must be the product of the professional military mind ("the warlords"); *ergo* the warlords now occupy a decisive position within the power elite ("the military ascendancy"). This may look impressive and convincing at a first glance, but a moment's reflection will show that it explains nothing and constitutes no support whatever for Mills' theory. Professional military people naturally think in military terms and have doubtless always tried to persuade others to see things their way. Throughout most of United States history, they have succeeded, if at all, only in wartime. The real problem is to understand why it is that since World War II the whole "power elite" has come to think increasingly in military terms and hence to accord a place of greater honor and power to the military. Without an answer to this, all the facts that seem to Mills to add up to the "military ascendancy" of the "warlords" remain quite unexplained.

Now Mills himself never faces up to this question, and the only relevant answer I can find is that the United States now, unlike in the past, lives in a "military neighborhood" (the phrase is used on a number of occasions), which presumably means that the country is under constant threat (or potential threat) of attack and military defeat. This is more sophisticated than saying that we live in mortal danger of red aggression, but its explanatory value is exactly the same: in either case the increasing militarization of American life

is the result of external forces. The rise of the warlords, then, is seen as the outcome of a world historical process for which the United States has no responsibility and over which it has no control, and not, as Mills clearly wants to prove, as the outcome of *internal* forces operating in the military domain.

Thus, while Mills appears to have little in common with the cold-war liberals, and in fact rather generally holds them in contempt, his theory of the role of the military leads to very much the same conclusions. I believe that this is no accident. "Elitist" thinking *inevitably* diverts attention from problems of social structure and process and leads to a search for external causes of social phenomena. Simon-pure elitists like Pareto and his followers frankly adopt this method and find what they are looking for in the alleged natural qualities of their elites. Semi-elitists like Mills—people who think they can adopt the terminology without any of the basic ideas of elitist theory—tend to get bogged down in confusion from which the only escape is to borrow the most banal ideas of their opponents.

It is too bad that Mills gets into this kind of a mess, because, as I indicated above, his work is strongly influenced by a straightforward class theory which, if he had stuck to it and consistently explored its implications, would have enabled him to avoid completely the superficialities and pitfalls of elitist thinking. The uppermost class in the United States is, and long has been, made up of the corporate rich who directly pull the economic levers. Prior to the Great Depression and World War II, the corporate rich left political and military matters largely (though by no means exclusively) in the control of hired hands and trusted agents; but since the highly dangerous economic breakdown of the 30s, the Big Boys have increasingly taken over the key positions themselves. Their unwillingness to solve the economic problems of capitalism through a really massive welfare state program meant that they welcomed the war as the salvation of their system. Since the end of World War II, they have accepted, nay created and sold through all the media of mass communications, a "military definition of reality" as the ideological-political underpinning of the war-preparations economy, which remains crucial to the whole profit-making mechanism on which their wealth and power rests. For this purpose, they have lavishly subsidized and encouraged the military, which in turn has not only grown vastly in size but also has been enormously flattered and has become the most loyal defender and promoter of the "free enterprise" system. The picture of "warlords" exercising a "military ascendancy" is fanciful: *our* warlords have no fundamental values or purposes different from those of their corporate colleagues; many of them perform virtually indistinguishable jobs; and the crowning

achievement of a military career today is the board chairmanship of a billion-dollar corporation.* At the same time, we have nothing even approaching a unified military order or caste seeking to impose its "military metaphysics" on the nation. The most famous of our "warlords," President Eisenhower, is now the most peaceful of our influential politicians; while our most strident "militarists" are civilian Senators Symington and Jackson whose closest affiliations would seem to be with the multi-billion-dollar aircraft industry.

No, the facts simply won't fit Mills' theory of three (or two) sectional elites coming together to form an overall power elite. What we have in the United States is a *ruling class* with its roots deeply sunk in the "apparatus of appropriation" which is the corporate system. To understand this ruling class—its metaphysics, its purposes, and its morals—we need to study, not certain "domains" of American life, however defined, but the whole system of monopoly capitalism.

A large part of Mills' theory and most of his facts support this view. This, indeed, is why his book, for all its weaknesses, is such a vital and powerful document. Let us hope that in the future he will drop *all* the elitist nonsense and make the contribution he is capable of making to deepening our theory and understanding of the American class system.**

In conclusion, I should like to comment very briefly on four of the many issues which would merit detailed discussion in a full-dress review of *The Power Elite*.

(1) Because he blurs the whole problem of class and class relations, Mills fails to throw any but incidental light on the dynamics

* On this whole range of topics, see the fascinating article entitled "They're Masters of Buying By the Billion" in *Business Week* for June 23, 1956. "They" are Generals C. S. Irvine and E. W. Rawlings, in charge of procurement and supply for the Air Force. Mr. Dudley C. Sharp, civilian Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, is quoted as saying: "These two could run any business in the world. They're absolutely the finest executives I've ever met." Chances are, too, that they will end up running one or more of the world's biggest businesses!

** Mills' reasons for rejecting the ruling class concept are stated in a footnote (p. 277) which deserves no more than a footnote in reply. "Ruling class," he says, is a "badly loaded" phrase in the sense that it contains the theory that "an economic class rules politically." What of it? The question is whether the theory is applicable to the United States today, and if investigation shows that it is, then the only "loading" is on the side of truth. As I have argued above, most of Mills' factual material supports the ruling class theory to the hilt—provided only that one doesn't insist on interpreting the words "economic" and "class" in an impossibly narrow and tortured way. For the rest, I have already said enough about Mills' alternative theory, repeated in the footnote in question, that a "coalition" of the "higher agents" of the "three domains" constitutes a power elite. (There is, of course, no loading at all in the phrase "power elite"!)

of the class system—how people lose high-class status, how new members of the ruling class are co-opted, and so on. In this connection, he completely fails to understand the role of the preparatory schools and colleges as recruiters for the ruling class, sucking upwards the ablest elements of the lower classes and thus performing the double function of infusing new brains into the ruling class and weakening the potential leadership of the working class. It is this aspect of the American educational system, involving as it does fairly generous scholarships and other forms of assistance for the bright poor, which is most often and least deservedly praised as democratic.

(2) While Mills' chapter on "The Celebrities" is informative and amusing, it is a hopeless muddle from the theoretical point of view. The celebrities—of screen, TV, radio, stage, sport—are not an integral part of the ruling class or the power elite, and in general they do not compete in prestige with the rich and the powerful. On the contrary, the rich and the powerful have every interest in building up the celebrities, partly because it is good business and partly to divert the attention of the underlying population from more serious matters. This is all part of what Mills elsewhere calls, in a memorable phrase, "the grim trivialization of American life." Mills' confusion on these questions—which of course does not prevent him from saying many true and penetrating things about them—stems in large part from the lack of any clear or usable theory of prestige. He treats prestige as a pure magnitude and quite misses the point that there are different kinds as well as quantities of prestige and that they have different bases and perform different functions in the social structure.

(3) I pointed out above (p. 141) that Mills strongly insists, quite rightly in my view, that major national decisions in this country are made by a relatively small group of people at the top of the social pyramid. But in his concern to drive this point home, it seems to me that he goes much too far in the direction of what I may call "historical voluntarism." On page 24 of *The Power Elite*, Mills makes the following statement:

It is . . . true that if most men and women take whatever roles are permitted to them and enact them as they are expected to by virtue of their position, this is precisely what the elite need *not* do, and often do not do. They may call into question the structure, their position within it, or the way they are to enact that position.

If this were *really* true, our only hope of understanding the behavior of the top group would be through psychoanalysis: the objectively discoverable pressures and compulsions of the social order

which operate on the rest of us would be irrelevant to these august Olympians. But of course it is not true, and I make so bold as to say that most of the time Mills himself knows it perfectly well. What corporation executive can afford to order his behavior without regard to his company's profit-and-loss statement? What American politician today can flout the interests of the corporate rich who put him in office? What military man can say that the Soviet Union is no menace and the United States should set the world an example of unilateral disarmament? To be sure, each one of these gentlemen can behave in the indicated fashion, provided he is prepared to lose his job and with it his power. But this is precisely the point: like everyone else, the "elite" have roles to perform, and for the most part they are exacting ones: failure means loss of position and power.

What Mills could and should have argued in this connection is that the roles are *not* like those of a theatrical performance, completely mapped out and rigidly determined in advance. The actors have a *range of choice* which is set by the nature and laws of the social structure under which they live, and this range may even include such fateful alternatives as that which faced Harry Truman in August of 1945, whether or not to drop a bomb that would in a single flash snuff out the lives of a quarter of a million human beings. "Men make their own history," Marx wrote in the *Eighteenth Brumaire*, "but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly found, given and transmitted from the past." That is the simple truth, confirmed by mountains of historical and personal experience alike. Why can't social scientists as reasonable and sensible as C. Wright Mills take it in *and hold onto it*?

(4) Finally, a word about a matter which has undoubtedly disturbed some left-wing readers of *The Power Elite*. Mills, they say, explodes many myths about the United States today. He shows that the country is run by a tiny irresponsible minority, and that in crucial respects the consequence is a drift from bad to worse. But he says nothing at all about what can or should be done about it.

For my part, I see no valid ground for criticism here. We should be grateful for such a good book, and we can draw our own conclusions about what to do about the situation it reveals. We can even go farther and commend Mills for his restraint: we know from his association with the magazine *Dissent* that Mills considers himself a socialist, and we can be pretty sure that under present circumstances *The Power Elite* with explicitly stated socialist conclusions would never have been published, reviewed, and read as it has been without the conclusions.

For the rest, it is no violation of principle not to set down everything in your mind every time you put pen to paper. What is a violation of principle is to set down a lot of things that aren't true or you don't believe, and on this score, so far as I am able to judge, Mills deserves a clean bill of health.

SUB AND BOOK OFFERS

(Prices effective January 1, 1957)

Monthly Review, 66 Barrow Street, New York 14, N. Y.

I enclose:

☐ \$4 for a one-year subscription

☐ \$7 for a two-year subscription

☐ \$5 for a one-year sub plus one of the following books:

..... THE BENDING CROSS by Ray Ginger (list price \$5)

..... MAN'S WORLDLY GOODS by Leo Huberman (paper edition)

☐ \$6 for a one-year sub plus one of the following books:

..... WAS JUSTICE DONE? by Malcolm P. Sharp (list price \$3.50)

..... THE TREASON OF THE SENATE by David Graham Phillips (list price \$4.75)

..... THE WORLD THE DOLLAR BUILT by Gunther Stein (list price \$4)

☐ \$7 for a one-year sub plus one of the following books:

..... THE PRESENT AS HISTORY by Paul M. Sweezy (list price \$5)

..... THE EMPIRE OF OIL by Harvey O'Connor (list price \$5)

☐ \$9 for a one-year sub plus the following book:

..... THE GREAT ROAD by Agnes Smedley (list price \$6.75)

Name Address

City Zone State

☐ This is a new subscription

This is a renewal ☐

All prices include postage. Send your order, with payment enclosed, to
Monthly Review, 66 Barrow Street, New York 14, N. Y.

MONTHLY REVIEW

AN INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST MAGAZINE

EDITORS:

Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy

An independent magazine devoted to analyzing, from a socialist point of view, the most significant trends in domestic and foreign affairs.

Clarity about the aims and problems of socialism is of greatest significance in our age of transition. Since, under present circumstances, free and unhindered discussion of these problems has come under a powerful taboo, I consider the founding of this magazine to be an important public service.

PROFESSOR ALBERT EINSTEIN

in his article "Why Socialism?"
in Vol. 1, No. 1

SUBSCRIPTION

One Year: \$4.00

Two Years: \$7.00

Single Copy: 35c.

Monthly Review, 66 Barrow St., New York 14, N. Y.

MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS PUBLICATIONS

I. F. STONE		
<i>The Hidden History of the Korean War</i> , 1952		\$5.00
I. F. STONE		
<i>The Truman Era</i> , 1953		\$3.00
LEO HUBERMAN		
<i>Man's Worldly Goods</i> , paper edition, 1952		\$1.00
GUNTHER STEIN		
<i>The World the Dollar Built</i> , 1953		\$4.00
DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS		
<i>The Treason of the Senate</i> , 1953		\$4.75
PAUL M. SWEETZ		
<i>The Present as History:</i> <i>Essays and Reviews on Capitalism and Socialism</i> , 1953		\$5.00
HARVEY O'CONNOR		
<i>The Empire of Oil</i> , 1955		\$5.00
MALCOLM P. SHARP		
<i>Was Justice Done? The Rosenberg-Sobell Case</i> , 1956		\$3.50
AGNES SMEDLEY		
<i>The Great Road: The Life and Times of Chu Teh</i> , 1956		\$6.75
HARVEY GOLDBERG, Editor		
<i>American Radicals: Problems and Personalities</i>	On Press	

MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS

66 Barrow Street
New York 14, New York